

## PIANO PERFORMANCE: FROM PERFORMERS TO EXECUTORS

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**Summary.** In the article the questions of evolution of performing art are examined on the example of the piano performing art. The author is tracing the stages of structural changes of keyboard instruments and expansion of their technical feasibilities. It resulted in changes both in the systems of the musical audio recording (in the aspects of semantics) and in consciousness of performers, that is caused by the theatricalization of performing practices. On the example of works of composers of the XXth century John Cage, George Crumb, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Arnold Schoenberg, Mauricio Kagel the elements of theatricalization of modern pianist are fixed in the article.

The conclusion of the article is the fact that the technological improvement of musical instruments provokes the changes in the world view paradigms of modern consciousness and creates new routes for development of composer's work.

A modern performer is more than a pianist-interpreter; he is a universal musician-propagandist of new music.

**Key words:** culture, art, performing art, evolution of the piano performing art.

In the contemporary world many of the existing concepts that were used either in the field of science or art have changed. For instance, today we can see that ancient alchemistic symbols are widely used in modern sciences including chemistry and astronomy. Actually, the terms have not changed radically but have gained new perspectives. These trends have been expanded widely also in the world of art. Many of old concepts from classical to neoclassical, modern to postmodern, tonal music to serial music have been renewed and gained new format. Today's musical performance has also been affected by these renovation trends. Even the instrumental performance, which is a relatively new field of art with its three-century history, has witnessed various changes. The musical instruments were the first things that were subjected to change.

Throughout the centuries various instruments, their case, strings, mechanical components, forms and sizes has been changed and new technologies were used in their structures. Thus, many of those instruments or their components that were behindhand of the time expired. The change of bows of stringed instruments in the post baroque Era, the transformation of the gamba and the viola into the cello, the use of electricity in the blower of the church organs can be showed as examples of those changes within the time. The same changes (or modifications) are also seen in the playing techniques. For instance, the playing technique of a range of instruments has been changed based on the rise of the virtuosity concept

in the romantic era. The purpose of the present study is to figure out the changes in the piano performance. Within a very short time, the Pianism has evolved from the clavecin to the clavichord and then to the piano. Though the main principles are almost the same, there are differences in the playing performance of these instruments. The difference is specifically seen in the articulation, namely, in finger technique and pedalling technique. Since the “stretching the strings” of the clavecin is basically different from the “striking the strings” of the clavichord and the piano, the change in the articulation was inevitable.

As for the pedalling technique these differences were in the principle aspect, and served for different purposes in the clavecin and the piano. For instance, while pedalling technique is used as a silencer to decrease the tone of the sound in the development phase of the clavecin, today pedals are used to make the sound softer or make certain notes sound longer in the piano. The development of modern piano has also witnessed various changes throughout the time. For instance, hammer mechanism, silencers, basic components, iron plate, pedals, and even notation systems can be included into those changes. The more the instrument is developed, the greater the composed works reflect the diapason.

While playing technique and performing style improved, it required to produce more suitable and sturdier instruments. This cycle served improvement of music and instruments. Like Ferdinand Ries, the student of Beethoven wrote in his memoirs; the piano of those times could not stand Beethoven’s strong playing. Strings were severed, hammers were dislocated. During the concert Ries helped his teacher by installing the hammers or taking out the severed strings from the piano. Piano producers of the day were examining those problems and trying to produce suitable pianos for the conditions of that day. Steel case, metallic string also the helix suitable for these strings and new components were the demands of those days. Towards the midst of the 19th century the piano started to take today’s shape. The virtuosos of the Romantic Era could perform their most popular works on such instruments. Within a half century the piano becomes the indisputable king of stages as a solo instrument. But this was not final. The rivalry among the famous firms that produced the piano triggered the pursuit of the excellent instrument. And such studies caused production of more sophisticated pianos. The use of

the left and the middle pedal after the development of the pedal mechanism can be given as an example on this issue. The improvement of hammer mechanism caused increasing of repetition (technique of repeating the notes fast). Therefore those new technical qualifications led to new sound colours and effects never heard before.

Also such alterations on instrumental piano performance are seen in every period. The polyphony of Bach in the Baroque Period, the sonatas of Beethoven in classical period and Chopin and Liszt changed the concepts of virtuosity in Romantic Period. In the Impressionistic Period, new concepts don’t affect piano performance. However, new concepts and initiations precipitate important changes in the following years.

Today piano composition and performance have experienced important progress. New composition techniques have played an important role in this issue. These initiations changed the vision of piano performance radically. For instance:

- Op. 23 (“Five piano pieces”), which Arnold Schoenberg composed by serial technique in 1923 (Serialism, twelve-tone technique).

As I declined before composers of the Impressionistic Period had attempted to diverge tonality concept. But those attempts did not lean new composition techniques. In the leadership of Arnold Schoenberg, piano works entered atonal music. With “Five piano pieces” (op. 23) the variety of the piano repertoire from traditional major-minor sequence was formalized.

- “Bacchanie” is one of the examples which John Cage presented in 1938 as a “Prepared Piano”. We come across the fact that piano keys can be programmed into different sounds. The instrument must be prepared according to the work before the performance. This preparation causes its surprising timbres. At this point all the piano keyboard or certain keys of the piano can be played in the manner of composer’s wishes.

- Also in 1952 John Cage in his work “4’33” presented meaning and concept of performance. It is a well-known work, which the first performance was executed by the piano and the pianist (29 August, Woodstock, New York, USA). Interestingly, none of the notes of the pieces were played. Pianist appeared on the stage, opened the instrument, turned over the pages by looking at the timekeeper and showed that the piece had finished by closing the instrument. With this work the composer pointed out that the SILENCE

could be music as well. However, this performance itself was a “stage performance” rather than a musical piece. Thus, this work was recognized as a beginning of the period when musicians could do some artistic actions on the stage besides music. Today performance is a free and a pioneer artistic trend.

- In the 1960s the electronic music was initiated by Mauricio Kagel and the concept of instrumental theatre was born. Kagel's studies in Köln's Musical Studios are seen in his works. He uses acoustic instrumental voice together with synthesizer sound in his works. Therefore, he becomes a pioneer to next generation. Kagel at the same time creates instrumental theatre by adding theatrical components to his works.

- The concept of “Amplified Piano” and a “Graphical Notation” by which George Crumb in the 1970s extended (amplified) the piano after the prepared piano can be regarded as one of the most important progress in the sound range of the instrument. Presented effects are emerged as the result of executor's manipulations during the performance and they do not demand preparation of the piano before. Also the name of George Crumb is etched in people's memory with the special notation of “Macrocosmos”, a piano piece. Graphical notation that is used in this work is known as Crumb's logo. George Crumb attracts notice not only to the aural but also the visual side of the music piece.

- Aleatory “controlled random” which was introduced by Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1970–80 of the XXc.; Aleatory is a composition style that came to scene in the second half of the 20th century. It was advanced despite the strict rules of the dodecaphonic composition techniques. It depended upon playing notes and musical blocks. Random composition techniques were divided into two parts as Total free and Random controlled. Total freeness was seen in improvisations or cadences written by the pianists. Composers usually prefer random controlled technique. Such types of works are difficult distinguished by the audience. Furthermore executors can present different work at every turn.

Prepared and Amplified techniques have affected piano performance most of all. These techniques have converted the pianist's classical performance characteristics. Prepared piano is compromised by pianist's installing various objects into the piano strings before the concert. These objects alter the sound of the piano from work to other work unrecognizably. Composer indicates these objects (metal, glass, tire etc.) in the

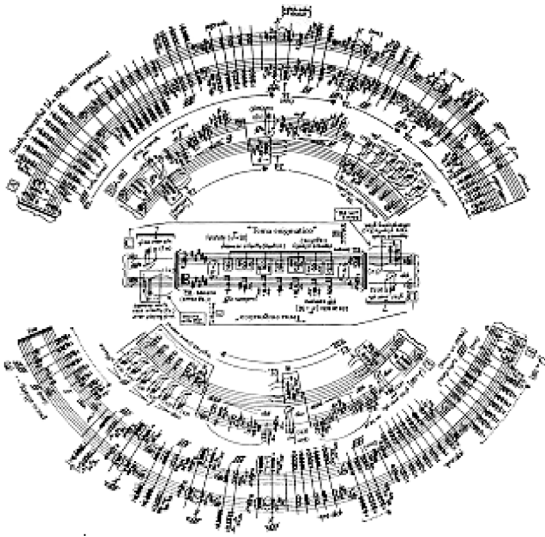
notes of the music work. Actually the changing of the sound of the piano is programmed till the end of the programme. Prepared voice diapason for each work is different. While in some works this is just a note, in the other works all of the clavier is prepared virtually. During the performance of these compositions it may be heard many surprising timbres rather than familiar piano sound. As the execution of “prepared piano” works presenting timbres is new, the stage image of the pianist as classical backstage missions of the pianist's has changed. S/he has to prepare his/her instrument according to what the work requires. The preparation sometimes may last longer because the positions of the items which are put among the strings are very important; falsely pinched strings may cause wrong sound. John Cage's “Sonatas and Interludes” (1946–48) can be given as an example.

In Amplified piano techniques apart from the keys that the pianist presses he shows different sounds or effects on the strings or cover and on the iron plate. These various affects are depicted in the notes but in distinction from the prepared piano they are not permanent. Pianist can leave the strings and continue playing with ordinary keys (“ord. — ’ordinario”). The sound of the piano is not programmed until the end of the concert. The technique of presenting special effects in or out of the piano, alongside the normal performance (“ord.”) during the execution exposes “extended sound range piano” concept. Later it was called shortly “Amplified Piano”. In this technique performer can play not only with his/her bare hands but also with various drumsticks, plectrums ...etc. (e. g. hitting the iron plate of the piano while pushing the pedal with a wooden hammer or playing the strings with plectrums).

In Amplified Piano technique the classical stage image of the pianist changes rather than prepared timbres. During the execution pianist may stand and play the strings of the piano, s/he may create various extraordinary effects. What make this technique is different from the prepared piano is that the pianist can always return his ordinary playing.

George Crumb's “Macrocosmos I and II” (1972–73) can be given as an example to these kinds of works. Each techniques presents different sound range (diapason).

Lastly in the “Instrumental Theatre” style which has changed the well-known image of stage, the pianist is not only a piano player but also s/he is the work executor according to the composer's plan.



The executor can also play the other instruments rather than the piano. He can perform various artistic roles on the stage; s/he can be part of the musical performance on the stage. Thus, it is apprehended that the image of the pianist who only performs music has changed. The executor means s/he is more than a pianist. This kind of musician must have stage performance abilities as well as pianistic abilities. Executor who is on and back of the stage must carry out the missions and roles, and act along with the composer's or the composition's requests.

Instrumental Theatre is frequently seen among the works of Mauricio Kagel and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Famous Azerbaijan composer Faradj Karaev's "Der Stand der Dinge" (1991) also can be given as an example.

### **Мірзоєв Самір**

#### **Фортепіанне виконавство: від класичного виконавства до перформансу**

*Анотація.* У статті розглядаються питання еволюції виконавського мистецтва на прикладі фортепіанного виконавства. Автор прослідковує етапи конструктивних змін клавійних інструментів та розширення їх технічних можливостей. Це привело до змін як у системах нотного звукозапису (в аспектах семантики), так і в свідомості виконавців, викликане театралізацією виконавських практик. На прикладі творів композиторів XX ст. Джона Кейджа, Джорджа Крамба, Карлхайнца Штокхаузена, Арнольда Шенберга, Маурісіо Кагеля в статті фіксуються елементи театралізації сучасного виконавця-піаніста.

Висновком статті є той факт, що технологічне удосконалення музичних інструментів проковує до змін у світоглядних парадигмах сучасної свідомості та створює нові маршрути для розвитку композиторської творчості.

Сучасний виконавець – це більше ніж піаніст-інтерпретатор, це універсальний музикант-пропагандист нової музики.

**Ключові слова:** культура, мистецтво, виконавське мистецтво, еволюція фортепіанного виконавства.

### **Мирзоєв Самир**

#### **Фортепьянное исполнительство: от классического исполнительства к перформансу**

*Аннотация.* В статье рассматриваются вопросы эволюции исполнительского искусства на примере фортепианного исполнительства. Автор прослеживает этапы конструктивных изменений клавирных инструментов и расширения их технических возможностей. Это привело к изменениям как в системах нотной звукозаписи (в аспектах семантики), так и в сознании исполнителей, вызванным театрализацией исполнительских практик. На примере произведений композиторов XX века Джона Кейджа, Джорджа Крамбе, Карлхайнца Штокхаузена, Арнольда Шёнберга, Маурисио Кагеля в статье фиксируются элементы театрализации современного исполнителя-пианиста.

Выводом статьи является тот факт, что технологическое усовершенствование музыкальных инструментов провоцирует изменения в мировоззренческих парадигмах современного сознания и создает новые маршруты для развития композиторского творчества.

Современный исполнитель — это больше чем пианист-интерпретатор, это универсальный музикант-пропагандист новой музыки.

**Ключевые слова:** культура, искусство, исполнительское искусство, эволюция фортепианного исполнительства.